

Members Present

Glen Locascio
Marcia Bromberg
Jim Grode
Susan Barlow
Stephen Jones

Staff Present

Roderick Simmons, Director
Debbie Ivester, Assistant Director
Al Kopf, Superintendent of Planning & Development
Abigail Riley, Special Projects Coordinator

Guests Present

Mariate Echeverry, Transportation
Janet GeorgeMurr, Transportation
Blake Esselstein, Planning

Council Present

Chris Pelly

Jim called the meeting to order at 3:30.

1. Welcome Chris Pelly, Asheville City Council Greenway Liaison

Jim says he is pleased to have him at the meeting and get help from him.

Chris says that he has lived Asheville for 20 years, mostly in East Asheville. He states that he knows greenways can advance the community. He says that he is in the committee's corner in order to improve the community.

Jim asks everyone to introduce themselves. Thereafter Glen, Stephen, Marcia, Jim and Susan introduced themselves as commission members and Al and Abby (the new Special Projects Coordinator, taking over for Megan and Christy) as staff.

3. Transportation Department Staff Introduction—Ken Putnam

Jim asks if any visitors would like to introduce themselves. Mariate, Transportation Manager, says that Ken Putnam is not able to come and they do not have anything formal to present. She says that she and Janet will be working with the Commission for multi-modal concepts when the Commission transfers to the Transportation Department. She will be the liaison between the Commission and the City. Janet will work with her in order to run meetings as the Commission sees fit.

Mary Weber, sitting in the audience, is a candidate for the Greenway commission (along with Tony Hauser). Jim welcomes her.

2. Approval of December minutes:

Jim asks for thoughts.

Stephen moved to approve the minutes, Susan seconded, and all approve the motion.

4. Annual Report—Jim Grode

Al prepared a draft of the Annual Report. He says that it needs to go to City Council no later than the end of the month. Marcia said it looks good. All members thanked Al for preparing it. Jim asked if anyone noticed something that needed to be added. Glen said it looked good, but there might be a wrong year. He says that Commission Transition should be 2012 not 2010.

Jim says that he does not want to change the report, but he wants to highlight “promote linear parks” in the bylaws. He thinks this definition is due for an update. He would like to talk to Chris about amending the ordinance. He asks Chris what needs to be done in order to make the change. Chris does not know the answer, but Roderick answers. Roderick says that the Public Art Board had the same transition. They had a retreat and looked at the master plan, they asked themselves what they wanted to accomplish, and they went to Council with their proposed changes. Roderick says that if this Commission wants to do that, they can go to Council with the proposed changes. Jim thinks they should start this process. Marcia thinks that summer will be a good time to do that, and she adds that maybe a facilitator can help them. Jim agrees. Roderick says they need to think outside the box. He references the Public Art Board again. He asks them to look at the scope of what they want to do so when council sees it, it looks as if they are looking to the future. Marcia asks if it can be postponed to a later date. Roderick says there is no rush, but they must think about the structure of the Commission as they do it. The Commission can use the Public Art Board as benchmark. Marcia asked for copies of the Public Art Board documents to see how it was structured both before and after its change.

Marcia moves to accept as the annual report, seconded by Stephen, and all approve the motion.

5. Greenway Commission Members—Jim Grode

Jim says that Sue Barlow was reappointed and Ally Donlan was appointed. He adds that Mary Weber and Tony Hauser will be interviewed on January 24, 2012.

6. Staff Updates—Planning and Parks Department

Blake Esselstein from the Planning Department gives the report. He says that there has not been any activity since the December meeting

Al gives his report. He says that the Reed Creek Greenway looks good with grass in many areas. He adds that the trail and northern half of the greenway are complete. It is lacking the bridge because the Department Of Transportation has not completed its review until recently. Although the trail is complete, it needs to connect the north and the southern parts with the bridge. Al says that a lot of people are utilizing it already. The bridge will be installed around February, and they will pave the last stretch of trail with asphalt.

He says that RFQ draft for the TIGER II grant for the Clingman Forrest and Town Branch is entirely complete. The Community Development office is running it by the Federal Government. It will be going out for professional services in the next week. Roderick and Al drafted a Recreation Trail Project Grant for the Reed Creek Greenway. This will be in by the end of the month.

Stephen wants to know where the south end of Reed Creek goes. Al says that the current project ends at Magnolia and will go southward from there towards downtown to follow along the creek. He continues that at Elizabeth Street, it starts to go subterranean. Stephen spoke to the importance of planning its connection to the downtown. He will be working with Mariate and transportation to further the project.

Marcia asks where they can go to stay off the road. Al answers that the development gets intense around there but you can go towards the Skate Park route or down Broadway. The Skate Park is closer to where the project is starting. Roderick says there will be transitions to on-roads.

Al says that he has met with Ken Putnam about what happens when there is a greenway and on-road transitions. He thinks maybe there could be bike lanes and wider sidewalks. We need to determine that in the future. Marcia says that she has seen pictures of items like planters being on these areas to show that you are still on a greenway. Marcia wants everyone to pay attention to the models that already fix these problems in other areas. Al says they have been considering how to do this with signage while being elegant about it and doing it without clutter. He continues that Beaucatcher, Town Branch, and Clingman present great opportunities to do this all.

Marcia talks about how Hominy Creek accomplished it. She talks about how to get people through a parking lot. She suggests painting warnings to let drivers know that people will be riding bikes or walking around that corner.

Marcia asks to whom the parking lot belongs across the street from Hominy Creek near the Armory. Marcia asks if the Armory belongs to the city and Al says that it does. She states that she wants a little path through that connector to come to the Hominy Creek area. She thinks the City would not have to do much to it to make this possible. Marcia said that Phyllis Stiles emailed them about a grant opportunity that could help funnel people on the greenway from the neighbourhood. Al says that it can be looked at and Al says that other CIP projects and funding need to be considered.

Blake talks about how tricky that area can be to develop. He says that it is not just a matter of removing the fence, but there are other considerations such as the steep slope and water crossing in the Waller track.

Jim asks Al about Choctaw and French Broad. He saw that behind the fire station is some grading. He wants to know if it can be consistent with the greenways in that area. Al says that it is work being coordinated closely with MSD. The Dr. Wesley Grant, Sr. Southside Center's middle phase had a sewer line there. He says that it collapsed, but MSD pushed it forward on their schedule and replaced it. He praises MSD for working with the City to get ahead of the greenway and allowing the building of the middle phase of the recreation center. He restates that the partnership worked well. Jim says that sounded like a good plan.

Chris wants to do a site visit of the greenways. He asks if it would be worthwhile. Jim says they have been talking about this, and he will send an email to do this in conjunction with the retreat. He would like to wait until it is warmer. Al says that sounds like a good idea to do with new members along with Mariate and Janet.

7. Community Outreach Committee Report—Sue Barlow

Sue says there has not been a lot of activity, but she think they will get off to a great year. Jim is doing a presentation tonight to the River Front Redevelopment Committee. He asks if the Commission can do tours beyond the map. He thinks that with better visuals, more people will understand.

8. Asheville-Buncombe Bicycle Pedestrian Task Force Report—Jim Grode

Jim says that he wants to work with Connect Buncombe and do some public relations for them.

Marcia says their plan that is connected with the City will be done in the summer.

Marcia asks Sue about planning and getting everyone together to prioritize. Sue wants to understand and go through the steps for making recommendations.

10. Asheville Parks and Greenway Foundation Update—Glen Locascio

Glen says they did not meet last month. He adds that they will be having a board retreat tomorrow morning at the Wesley Grant Southside Center for three hours. He says there are six new board members. He thinks these new members will give a good boost of energy to the Foundation and good start to 2012. He will report on the retreat next month.

9. Buncombe County Greenway Commission Update—Marcia Bromberg

Marcia says they did not meet.

Marcia says she went to the Thread Conference. This is why she missed the December meeting. It takes place on the Carolina Thread Trail, from South Carolina to North Carolina in communities that were a part of the textile industry. It includes pedestrian and greenway trails. She encourages people to go to the conference. It is held in early December.

She went to a session in Rock Hill, South Carolina with an old plant south of Charlotte. It used a piece of polluted property where a developer came in with a proposal to clean it up and make it residential and commercial. However, they built a greenway first. She finds the project interesting because they funded it through a TIFF. The City pledged tax revenue for it. The developer also pledged. She says that the partners worked together because the City was aggressive in completing the project.

Marcia says that she wants to do this in the River Arts District for greenways. She thinks the City can show business, organizations, and other governments what can happen with these types of partnerships. She understands there are different tracts of land, but she wants to get the funding and begin developing it. She also understands there are hurdles, but she thinks they can do it. She wants to get a five-year plan started. She thinks it is a critical piece for greenways. She encourages everyone to go to next year's meeting.

11. Street Closure of a Portion of South Pack Square—David Foster

David Foster is not here to talk to about street closure.

Al speaks to it instead. He says the street closure is due to the restroom being developed in Pack Park. Al says when they created Pack's Square, they never closed the right of way for this former road. Jim says that is very helpful because he was confused.

Marcia moves to approve the street closure, Susan seconds it, and all approved the street closure.

Stephen asks if it is open all year. Roderick and Al say it is open during park hours. Stephen says that is it really important to have it open all the time. Al says intentions are to have it open as much as possible.

12. New Business

Jim asks about new business.

He brought in brochures for the Riverfront Redevelopment Commission. Along with the Greenways brochures, the Commission has plenty to give to Chris if he needs them for presentations.

Marcia says the Greenway Commission can make a presentation if he wants neighbourhoods to know more about greenways. She says that people need to understand and support it. She wants to prepare the public for what is to come. She continues that the county is working on public awareness.

Al says thank you on behalf of the staff for to the Commission members. He appreciates their time, effort, and all they do for the city. Jim thanks him for all his help and support. Marcia says staff has put up with a lot, but she appreciates everything they have done. Al says that Parks and Recreation will continue to attend each meeting, and it is now a team approach.

Jim adjourns at 4:15.